



THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF 76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

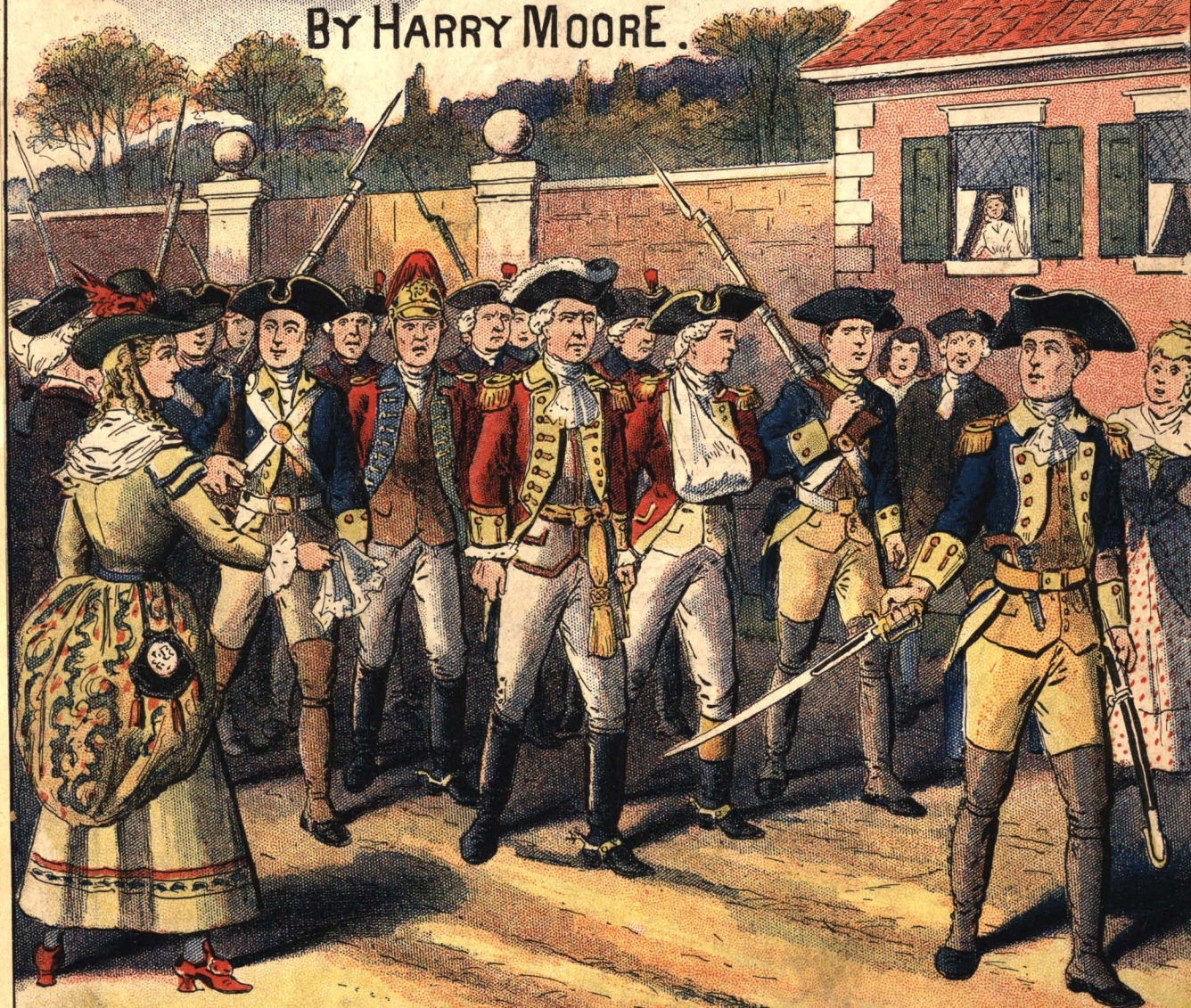
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THE LIBERTY BOYS' TRAP; AND WHAT THEY CAUGHT IN IT. BY HARRY MOORE.



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Dick marched in front, erect, handsome and manly. The British prisoners were a sick-looking lot of men.

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THE LIBERTY BOYS' TRAP

And What They Caught In It.

By **HARRY MOORE.**

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD PEDDLER.

It was almost sundown.

It had been a beautiful day in the month of June.

It was the year 1777.

The War of the Revolution was just reaching its most interesting stage.

The British army occupied the village of New Brunswick, in New Jersey.

The patriot army occupied the village of Middlebrook.

Middlebrook was about ten miles from New Brunswick.

The British army numbered eighteen thousand men.

The patriot army consisted of but eight thousand.

Yet Generals Howe and Cornwallis were hesitating.

They wished to cross New Jersey, penetrate into Pennsylvania and capture Philadelphia, which was called the "rebel capital."

But they had been taught by bitter experience that it would not do to be rash.

If they laid themselves open in any way, Washington would take prompt advantage of it.

He had already proven this at Trenton and at Princeton.

In truth the British generals were afraid of Washington.

They realized that he was a great general.

A man capable of doing what he had already done with an inferior force of men was a dangerous opponent under any circumstances.

And just now he occupied an impregnable position.

Moreover, it was close upon the line of march of the British if they should start on their march across New Jersey, and he would be able to drop in behind them and cut off their communication with New York.

This might prove fatal.

So Generals Howe and Cornwallis had remained at New Brunswick hesitating.

They seemed unable to make up their minds what to do.

But to return to the story:

On this beautiful evening of which we write, an old hunch-backed peddler was walking slowly down the main street of New Brunswick.

He hobbled along slowly and painfully.

He was seemingly sixty years of age, and while carrying a great pack on his back bent forward and placed a great deal of weight on the stout stick which he used to walk with.

As he was passing along he met a little group of British soldiers.

They were laughing and talking, and were evidently well content with their lot.

"Hello!" exclaimed one of the soldiers, with a laugh; "here's Methuselah come to life again. Isn't he a beauty!"

"He looks like you, Carrollton," said another, with a laugh.

The redcoats had been drinking some, and this one in particular had had just enough so that he was easily irritated.

"What! this old duffer look like me?" he cried angrily;

"he looks more like a scarecrow than like a human! Get off the walk! Don't you see there are gentleman here?"

With the words the redcoat gave the old man a push, which sent him off the walk and into the gutter.

The push had evidently been unexpected, for the old man almost fell.

He caught himself, however, showing he was possessed of considerable strength and agility as he did so, and then he took a step forward and gave the redcoat a rap alongside the head with the stick, knocking the fellow down.

"Take that for your insolence!" cried the old man, in a curious, high-pitched voice; "take that, and may it teach you to be more like a gentleman in your behavior toward the aged!"

If ever there was a surprised fellow it was the redcoat who had been knocked down.

The blow which he had received was not such a very hard one.

But he had not been expecting anything of the kind.

It had taken him entirely unawares.

Consequently he had gone down before it with a crash.

He was more angry than surprised, however.

He was the maddest man in New Brunswick at that moment, without a doubt.

He leaped to his feet.

He gave utterance to a cry of rage.

"I'll make you suffer for that, you old scoundrel!" he cried.

He rushed at the old man.

Evidently it made no difference to him that the man was old and seemingly infirm.

The peddler had struck him and that was enough.

He would have revenge for the blow.

He had no thought that he would be unable to get the revenge.

He supposed the blow administered was in the nature of an accidental blow.

He would not have believed it possible that the thing could be duplicated.

He was to learn this mistake, however.

"Have a care, young man!" cried the old man, in his high-pitched voice.

But the redcoat would not be warned.

He was panting to avenge the blow which he had received.

"I'll show you!" he cried, hoarsely, and he struck out at the old man.

He struck fiercely.

Had the blow landed it would have stretched the old man out on the sidewalk.

But it did not land.

Up came the heavy walking-stick as the redcoat struck out.

The old man handled the club with amazing dexterity and quickness.

The stick struck the redcoat on the wrist, knocking the arm upward.

So strong was the blow that the redcoat was whirled half-way around.

He gave utterance to a cry of pain.

"Oh, my arm!" he cried; "my wrist is broken!"

"And serves you right," said the old man; "it serves you right. You had no business making sport of an old man in the first place, and if you had got your head broken as well as your wrist, you would get only what you deserve."

"Oh, say, that's too rough, old man!" cried one of the redcoats; "you haven't got any right to pound him with a club in that fashion!"

"Give me any of your sauce and I will serve you the same way, young man," said the old man, promptly.

It was evident that the old peddler's blood was up.

"What right had he to push me off the walk, I would ask you?"

"Well, that was just in fun. He didn't hurt you."

"Nor did I hurt him very much the first lick I struck him; but he came back at me and was going to knock me down, and I had to do something to protect myself."

"Well, you needn't have broken his wrist."

"It isn't broken."

The old man spoke quietly.

The fellow with the lame wrist was making enough fuss, however.

Had it been broken of a certainty he could not have made more noise.

He threatened that he would murder the peddler.

And he even went so far as to draw a pistol with his left hand.

He found this knocked out of his hand very quickly, however.

"Don't try anything of that kind, young man," said the old peddler.

The blow from the stick was partly on the fellow's wrist this time also, and he uttered another great howl and leaped and danced wildly about, and gave utterance to curses.

The fellow who had spoken up in behalf of his comrade now decided that he would take a hand.

He leaped forward.

He struck out at the old man.

The old peddler saw him just in the nick of time.

He stepped aside and brought his stick around with a swish.

Crack!

It took the redcoat alongside the jaw.

He gave utterance to a yell, and went down on the sidewalk.

"You've broken my jaw!" he howled.

"Hardly—else you would be unable to howl at such a rate!" was the reply in the same high-pitched voice.

"Jove!" exclaimed another of the redcoats; "this is too much! I am not going to stand here and see an old scallywag like this knock the boys around in such a manner! Come on, fellows, let's give him a good pounding!"

"We're with you, Howard!" cried one, and then the four or five started in to give the old man a thrashing.

It was a sight that would have aroused the indignation of any fair-minded person.

The idea of four or five young men attacking one old one was preposterous, even though the old man had a stick.

It was the act of cowards.

Doubtless the young men would not have done as they did had they not been drinking.

But they had been drinking, and they started in to give the old man a beating.

Then ensued a surprising thing:

The old man seemed to become as lithe and active as a cat.

He leaped here and there with great agility.

He whirled the stick about his head and thumped the redcoats over the head with it with astonishing ease and dexterity.

Had the soldiers not been so busy trying to dodge the stick, they would have noted the wonderful agility of the old man, and marveled greatly thereat.

But they were kept so busy they did not have time to think.

They leaped hither and thither, in their endeavors to escape the blows rained upon them by the old man.

But they did not succeed.

They each received blows in turn, and one after another they went down on the sidewalk or in the gutter from thumps alongside the head.

The old man was certainly expert with the stick.

The redcoats would be able to bear witness to this fact.

It was certainly a unique contest.

One would have expected that the old man would have been very quickly overpowered, and that the redcoats, outnumbering him so greatly, would speedily get the better of him.

But such had not proved to be the case.

The wonderful agility of the peddler had kept him out of harm's way, while the quick, vicious strokes with the stick had quickly taken the fight out of his opponents.

At last the redcoats had enough.

They leaped to their feet, and instead of trying to renew the combat, they limped away—nearly all having received blows on arms, legs and body as well as on the head.

One old man had vanquished seven young, strong and lusty soldiers!

Then the old peddler calmly picked up his pack, which he had dropped at the beginning of the affray, and placing it on his back, he went on up the street, leaning forward and bracing himself on the stout stick which had done such execution in the combat just ended.

As the old man walked along he chuckled to himself.

"What a joke!" he murmured; "I wonder what those redcoats would say if they knew it was Dick Slater, the patriot spy, who had thumped them with the stick?"

And then he chuckled again.

Dick Slater!

The patriot spy!

Yes, the old peddler was indeed Dick!

Dick was the champion boy spy of the Revolution.

No reader of the stories of "The Liberty Boys of '76" need be reintroduced to Dick.

They knew him well.

But perhaps there may be some new readers.

For their benefit we will state that Dick Slater, whose home was near Tarrytown, N. Y., was the captain of a company of youths of about his own age—eighteen—these youths being known as "The Liberty Boys of '76."

In addition to being captain of the company, Dick had acted often as a spy.

Under orders from General Washington, the commander-in-chief of the patriot army, he had already penetrated into the British lines on a number of occasions, and had gained valuable information, information which had enabled the commander-in-chief to checkmate the British on various occasions.

And on this beautiful evening Dick was in the heart of the British encampment at New Brunswick.

And again he was there under orders from General Washington.

He was there to gain information regarding the contemplated movements of the British.

The actions—or want of action—of the British, for the past two or three months had puzzled Washington greatly.

He could not understand what it meant.

But he wished to know.

Feeling that the best way to find out was to send a spy into the encampment of the British, he had called Dick to headquarters that morning and told him to go to New Brunswick and find out what the British intended doing, if such a thing was possible.

Dick had said simply: "Very well, your excellency; I will go and do the best I can," and then he had left headquarters, and an hour later was on his way to New Brunswick.

At an old, deserted farmhouse three miles from New Brunswick he had donned his disguise of a peddler, and had made up the pack with a few articles such as servant girls would buy, and had gone into New Brunswick afoot, leaving his horse at the old house.

He had walked about for an hour, visiting back doors, and had sold a few trinkets, and now, after his encounter with the redecoats he made his way around to the rear of a large house which he knew to be the headquarters of Generals Howe and Cornwallis.

"Now comes the tug of war!" said Dick to himself, as he approached the rear door of the house in question; "I must gain entrance in some way, so as to get a chance to overhear the conversation of Generals Howe and Cornwallis. I know of no way to accomplish it, unless by bribing a servant. Perhaps I may be able to do that. I'll try it, anyway."

Then Dick knocked on the door.

CHAPTER II.

DICK MAKES FRIENDS WITH THE COOK.

Dick had to wait a few minutes.

Then the door opened.

A buxom woman—evidently the cook—stood there.

She looked at Dick with evident disfavor.

"Well, what d'ye want?" she asked.

"I have here some beautiful articles in the way of jewelry and laces, fair lady," said Dick; "I would like to show them to you, lady; I am sure you would buy when you see how cheap they are."

The woman was flattered somewhat by being called a "fair lady."

Then her feminine heart was appealed to by the words "jewelry" and "laces."

She could not resist the temptation to look at the goods.

She invited Dick in.

He entered.

He was well pleased.

He thought that he might succeed in making his scheme work,

The woman closed the door when Dick had entered the room—which proved to be the kitchen—and he sat down and opened his pack.

On one of his trips to New York, Dick had bought a lot of trinkets, jewelry and laces, with the idea of making them serve him in this very way.

Now he was glad that he had thought of doing this.

It would give him an opportunity to listen to at least one conference between Generals Howe and Cornwallis.

That is, if he worked it right.

Dick sized up the cook carefully.

He decided that she was good-natured and good-hearted.

If his judgment of her was correct, he would be able to work his scheme, he was sure.

He showed the cook the jewelry and laces and other trinkets.

He watched the woman closely, and whenever he saw by her looks that she liked a thing, he laid it aside.

He soon had quite a little pile of jewelry, trinkets and laces, and feeling that the time was ripe for the execution of his scheme, he decided to put his plan in operation.

Suddenly he gave vent to a little cry of well-simulated pain.

He clasped his hand to his side.

"Oh!" he gasped; "oh—my—h—heart!"

Dick's acting was so good that the cook did not suspect.

She proved that Dick's estimate of her had been correct.

She was good-hearted.

"Poor old man!" she exclaimed; "what is it? Can I do anything to help you? I have some camphor here! I——"

"It's—my—heart!" gasped Dick; "it—bothers—me often!"

The cook ran and brought the camphor bottle, and Dick smelled of the camphor.

"Are you better?" the woman asked, presently, anxiously.

Dick shook his head.

"I—I'm afraid—not," he said; "when I am perfectly quiet it—doesn't—seem to—pain—me so much, but when I—move, it gives me intense pain. I—don't—know—what to—do. I can't walk and carry my pack; in fact, I—I don't believe I would dare walk at all. I must get somewhere where I can be perfectly quiet."

"Goodness!" said the woman; "this is bad! Ye can't

stay here in the kitchen, an' I hate to turn ye out when ye are sick."

"Isn't there some vacant room up in—the—attic?" asked Dick.

He paused and made a terrible grimace, and groaned in a low, intense fashion.

"I would not bother you long," went on Dick; "I—expect—that—I—shall—be all right by morning. If you can find a place for me—till—I—get better, I will—give—you this jewelry and lace that you liked," and Dick indicated the pile of jewelry, trinkets and laces.

The woman's eyes glistened.

It was evident that she would like to have the articles indicated.

"It could do no harm, I'm thinkin'," she said, half to herself.

"Of course not, lady!" said Dick, "please let me lie in an attic room till I am better."

The woman hesitated.

Doubtless there were strict orders out against the admittance of any one to the house, except on order from General Howe.

The woman no doubt felt that she was taking some chances.

But she decided to risk it.

"I'll let ye stay!" she said, presently; "but ye'll have to be as quiet as ye can. This is the headquarters for Generals Howe an' Cornwallis, an' if they should hear any noise they would see what caused it, an' I would lose my place in a hurry, an' maybe my head as well!"

"I'll not have to make any noise when I get where I can be perfectly still," said Dick.

"Very well; come with me—or, can ye walk at all?"

"I think so, lady."

"I'll carry your pack."

"Thank you; but hadn't you better put your jewelry and laces away? Some one might come in and find them."

The woman took the articles in question and placed them in a closet at one side of the room; then she picked up Dick's pack and led the way upstairs, a servant's stairway running up from the kitchen.

Dick felt almost ashamed of himself to let the woman carry his pack upstairs.

"Just to think of me letting a woman carry my pack for me, when I am stout and more than able to do it myself!" he thought.

But it was necessary to let the woman carry the pack, in order to carry out the deception which Dick was practicing.

If he had been able to carry the pack upstairs, he would

have been able to go out into the street and continue his journey.

So it wouldn't do for him to carry the pack.

He must let the woman carry it, as it was necessary to the carrying out of his plans.

Dick made considerable fuss over getting up the stairs.

He gave utterance to low, intense groans.

The woman was evidently afraid he would be heard, for she cautioned him.

"Don't make any more fuss than ye can help, poor man!" she said; "somebody might hear ye."

Dick did not wish this to happen, of course.

So he made but very little noise after that.

All he wished to do was to keep this woman from being suspicious, and there seemed to be no danger that she would suspect him now.

So he confined his expressions to sighs and little groans that could not have been heard by any one five feet away.

They went on up to the attic.

Here the woman showed Dick into a little room.

There was a cot and a couple of chairs in the room.

"Ye can stay here to-night," the woman said; "if ye are well enough, it will be best for ye to leave before daylight in the mornin', as then ye wouldn't be noticed."

"I think I'll be well enough, lady," said Dick.

Then he thanked her for her kindness.

"Never mind thankin' me," the woman said; "I could not think of turnin' ye out when ye are sick."

"Lots of persons would do so," said Dick.

"But I wouldn't. I'll bring ye somethin' to eat after awhile."

"Thank you!" said Dick.

Then the woman went back downstairs.

"Well, this is luck!" thought Dick. "Here I am in the house that is used as headquarters for General Howe and his staff. Jove! I hope I shall learn something of value before I leave the place!"

Dick wondered when the woman would bring him something to eat.

If he had thought there would be time, he would have slipped downstairs to see if he could pick up something in the way of news; but she might come up at any moment, and then if she found him gone she would suspect him at once.

No, he must wait until after she had brought up the food, and had gone back downstairs; then he would be safe in venturing away from the room.

An hour passed.

Then Dick heard footsteps coming up the attic stairs.

To carry out the deception, he lay down on the cot.

He breathed laboriously.

When the woman entered, she asked if Dick felt better.

He answered that he felt about the same—which was true.

The cook had brought a bit of a candle and some food.

"D'ye think ye can eat something?" she asked.

"I'll try," said Dick.

The woman placed the food on a little table and turned to depart.

"I'll come up after awhile an' get the dishes," she said.

"Very well, lady," said Dick.

The woman hesitated.

She seemed to wish to say something.

Presently she spoke.

"I heard some stories downstairs," she said.

Dick felt sure the stories referred to him in some way, so he asked:

"Stories? What about?"

"I hear it told that an old peddler thrashed seven of the king's soldiers on the street this evening!"

"Oh, that's it, eh?" thought Dick.

Aloud he said:

"So you heard that, did you?"

"Yes, an'—are ye the old peddler that thrashed them?"

"Yes, lady," replied Dick, promptly; "one of them pushed me off the sidewalk, and I gave him a clip alongside the head with my stick. Then all of them attacked me, and I defended myself. I hated to lift my hand against the soldiers of the king, but I could not permit them to pound me at their pleasure. Self-defense is the first law of Nature, lady, you know."

"Yes, an' I don't blame ye for thrashin' them; but," and she looked at Dick curiously; "I wouldn't have thought ye could have thrashed seven of them, even with the aid of the stick."

"I don't see how I was able to do it, either, lady. I think that is what caused me to have trouble with my heart; the excitement and exertion was too much for the organ, and the strain on it was too severe. I shall have to be very careful for weeks and perhaps months."

"That is too bad."

Then the woman took her departure, leaving Dick to eat the food which she had brought.

It proved to be well-cooked, wholesome food, and there was plenty of it.

As Dick had had nothing to eat since eleven o'clock, he was quite hungry, and he did the meal full justice.

He ate pretty much everything, and when the woman returned for the dishes she looked a little bit surprised.

The old peddler had eaten heartily for a sick man.

"The pain and weakness at my heart does not affect my appetite at all," said Dick, divining her thoughts; "in fact, if anything, I eat more when I am troubled this way."

"Oh, that is it?"

The woman never seemed to think of doubting Dick's word.

She was such a good-natured, good-hearted woman that Dick felt a little qualm of conscience on account of deceiving her.

It was for a good purpose, however, so he felt that it was not wrong.

The woman gathered up the dishes, and after expressing the hope that Dick would be much better by morning, she withdrew.

"Now, I must get ready for a dangerous bit of work," thought Dick.

It was his intention to penetrate to the room used by General Howe as a council chamber, if such a thing was possible.

If not, then he was determined to at least get close enough so as to be enabled to overhear the conversation of the general and the members of his staff.

This would be a difficult and dangerous task.

Dick knew this.

He had not been a spy for nearly a year without learning a few things.

But the danger would not deter him in the least.

Dick never let it have the least influence.

A spy was ever in danger.

He took his life in his hands whenever he penetrated to the lines of the enemy.

Dick knew this, but gave it no thought.

The only thing that bothered him was, would he secure the information he wished to secure?

If he could do that, he would care nothing for the dangers he might have to pass through.

Dick waited half an hour, so as to let things get quiet down after the bustle of the evening meal.

Dick was just on the point of starting out on his tour of investigation, when he heard footsteps on the stairs leading up to the attic.

"Somebody is coming!" thought Dick.

A feeling of dismay took possession of him.

"I wonder who they can be?" he asked himself; "and why are they coming up here?"

He was soon enlightened.

As the footsteps grew louder, the voices of the approaching persons could be heard.

Dick was enabled to understand what was being said.

Doubtless one of the approaching persons was grumbling, for the voice of the other was heard saying, explainingly:

"You see, the old peddler was seen to enter the house, but was not seen to leave it. The cook either can't or won't give any information where the peddler went, and the order was given to search the house from cellar to attic."

Dick's heart gave a throb.

They were searching for him!

CHAPTER III.

NEARLY FOUND OUT.

He looked around the little room.

The cook had left the candle.

So he could see very well.

He looked to see if there was a possible hiding-place.

There seemed to be no place where he could hide.

He happened to glance upward.

The room was unfinished.

There was no ceiling save the pitched roof.

There were cross stringers, however.

And at one side some boards had been laid over the stringers.

This made a platform perhaps six feet square.

Dick decided to climb up there.

It was his only hope of escaping discovery.

It was a slim one, but better than none.

He seized his pack and tossed it up onto the boards.

The sight of it would have betrayed him at once to the approaching men.

They were close at hand, now, too.

The sound of their footsteps and voices was very loud and distinct.

If Dick succeeded, he would have to hurry.

He seized the bit of candle, extinguished the light and disappeared on top of the table.

Then he quickly pulled himself up and took refuge on the little platform.

He rolled over and over till he was back under the eaves and as far away from the edge as he could get.

He had hardly executed this maneuver when the door opened.

"Nobody here," said one of the men.

"No; unless he is in that closet, yonder."

"I'll look."

Footsteps were heard crossing the floor.

Then the sound of a door opening was heard.

"The closet is empty," came in a muffled voice, the man having his head inside the closet.

"All right; let's move on."

Dick's heart leaped.

"I'm going to escape detection after all!" he thought.

But the next words he heard caused him to change his mind.

"Maybe he's up on that platform of boards, there!"

Dick's heart sank.

"I'm bound to be discovered now!" he thought.

"Bah! no; he's not up there!"

"I'm going to see, anyway," was the reply.

Then Dick heard the man climb up on top of the table.

The fellow would have discovered Dick without doubt, but for a lucky accident.

The table was a small one.

The legs were set well in under the top, the latter projecting considerably at the sides.

The man happened to get all his weight on the projecting edge of the table, and the board split off, throwing the fellow to the floor with a crash.

"Murder! I'm killed!" howled the fallen man.

"Are you hurt, Winston?" asked the other, and Dick could tell from the tone that the fellow was laughing.

No doubt the affair seemed funny to him.

It is funny to see some one else fall down, but we never see anything funny in it when we ourselves fall.

It depends on the point of view.

The fallen man seemed to understand that his companion was laughing at him, and he resented it.

"What's the matter with you?" he growled; "it's funny, isn't it!"

"Well, you did look comical taking that tumble, that's a fact," was the reply.

"No doubt of it!" drily; "of course, it looked funny to you. Such things always do to the spectators; but I assure you it seems anything but funny to me."

The other laughed aloud at this.

"I guess you are all right, Winston," he said. "I'll help you up."

"I can help myself," in a growling tone.

Then Dick heard the fellow scramble up.

"How about it?" asked the other; "do you still think the old peddler may be up there on that platform?"

Something very like a muttered curse escaped the other redcoat.

"If he is, he can stay there, for all of me!" he growled.

The other fellow laughed.

"We will say he isn't there, and let it go at that," he said.

"I'm satisfied, if you are. I think I have done my share toward trying to see if he is there."

"And my share, too. Come on; he's not here."

The two left the room, closing the door behind them.

Dick drew a breath of relief.

"That was a close call," he thought; "I thought sure I would be discovered; and I would have been, too, had the table not collapsed.

Dick listened.

He could still hear the redcoats talking, and knew that they had not yet gone back downstairs.

He decided to wait until they did go back, as they might take a notion to look into this room again.

Dick believed in being on the safe side.

Presently the men started back downstairs.

Dick heard their footsteps grow fainter and fainter as they went down, and when he could no longer hear them he climbed back down out from his place of hiding.

Dick was in the dark.

He had extinguished the candle, and he had no flint and steel to strike another light with.

This did not make much difference, however.

Dick felt confident he could find his way about the house without a light.

He would be less liable to be discovered, too, if he went about in the darkness.

He would not dare carry a light after he got downstairs.

"I might as well get to work," he thought; and then he left the room and made his way downstairs to the second floor.

He had been very careful to take note of the hallway as he came up with the cook a couple of hours before, and now he knew which way to go.

He made his way along the hall, feeling his way in the darkness.

It was slow work.

Dick did not know where the stairway was.

He might reach the head of the stairs and fall, if he was not careful.

So he had to go slow.

At last he saw a glimmer of light ahead.

A little farther and he saw that the light came up from below.

Then he realized that he was almost to the stairway.

A step or two farther and he reached the head of the stairs.

He paused and listened.

The sound of voices came up to him.

There seemed to be several different voices.

"They are holding a council of war, now," thought Dick.

The thought excited him.

He must get down there and hear what was being said.

He may already have missed much that was of importance.

The thought troubled him.

He reflected that he was not to blame for not having got there, however.

But now that he was within hearing of the voices of General Howe and the members of his staff Dick became eager.

"I must hear a portion of the conversation," he said to himself; "doubtless I shall be enabled to learn a great deal that will be of value to General Washington, even then."

Dick did not delay long.

He began descending the stairs.

He went very slowly.

A misstep might cause his presence to be discovered.

This would of course be ruinous.

He would be captured.

Then the fact that he was disguised would be discovered.

The disguise would be removed, and he would be recognized, for he was well known to many of the British officers and soldiers.

It did not take long to reach the foot of the stairs.

Dick paused and listened.

The sound of the voices was the only sound he heard.

Dick was afraid he might run across a servant or a sentinel.

He felt that there was too much at stake to permit of his being careless.

He would have to exercise the utmost care.

There was a faint light in the hall.

It came from the room occupied by the men whose voice Dick heard

It shone through the crack of the door and over the transom.

A hall ran the entire length of the house.

Rooms were on both sides of the hall.

Dick saw there was a room adjoining the room occupied by the men holding the council of war.

If he could effect an entrance into this room he might be able to overhear what was said.

It was worth trying, anyway.

He passed the door leading into the room occupied by the

British officers, and went on till he came to the next door.

This door he tried.

To his great satisfaction he found the door was not locked.

Dick pushed the door open.

The room was dark.

This suited him well—with the exception that there was the chance that the room might be occupied.

If this should be the case he might be discovered.

He would have to take the chances, however.

So he entered.

He closed the door gently behind him.

He made as little noise as possible.

This was in accordance with his nature, anyway.

He was cautious when caution was necessary.

He could be reckless where recklessness was likely to be of value.

He tiptoed across the room.

He was soon across.

He found there was a connecting door.

This would make it easier for him to hear the conversation going on in the other room.

He could place his ear to the keyhole and hear nicely.

He bent over and placed his left ear against the keyhole.

CHAPTER IV.

DICK HEARS SOMETHING OF INTEREST.

The very first words Dick heard were of immense interest to him.

They were given utterance to by one of the men in the council, of course, but Dick could not identify the man by his voice.

The words were:

"Then you have decided positively to move on Philadelphia, General Howe?"

"I have," was the reply, in the voice of General Howe.

Dick was familiar with the British general's voice, and recognized it.

"When will you make the movement?" asked another voice.

"I don't know."

There was considerable discussion after this.

Some thought it best to start at once; others thought

it best to wait a day or two and get everything in perfect readiness before starting.

"It won't do to take any chances with that man Washington!" declared one; "he will be on the lookout and ready to take advantage of any weakness. We must be ready to repel the attacks of the rebels promptly and effectually."

Some of the others were of the same way of thinking.

General Howe himself was one of these.

He seemed to entertain the greatest respect for General Washington's ability as a general.

"I wonder where Cornwallis is?" thought Dick. "He does not seem to be present at the council."

Cornwallis was not far away, as Dick was to discover presently.

Presently there came an interruption.

Some one came in.

Dick recognized the voice of the newcomer as being that of one of the two men who had been in the garret room looking for the old peddler.

He had come to report the result of the search.

"We have searched the house from cellar to garret, your excellency," he said; "and have to report that the peddler is not to be found."

"That is strange," said General Howe; "I don't see what has become of him. I think he must have left the house, as the cook says, and his departure was not noticed. You may go."

The man withdrew.

"It is best to be careful," said General Howe, when the man had withdrawn; "the old peddler might have been a spy. We never know in what guise those fellows may appear. Especially is this true of that young scoundrel, Dick Slater. I verily believe that sly young rascal has been present at some of our councils. He has become possessed of secrets that could only have been secured by so doing, at any rate!"

"He is a wonder, that fellow!"

"So he is!"

"He is young, but a very successful spy."

"He is a regular dare-devil. He is afraid of nothing, and will take any chances, if by so doing he gets a chance to secure valuable information."

Thus spoke the other members of the council.

They were all familiar with the stories of the wonderful exploits of Dick Slater, the patriot boy spy.

And some of them were personally acquainted with Dick.

In his work as a spy among the British, Dick had been captured twice, and had escaped quickly each time.

"I am very glad to know I am held in such esteem, gen-

lemen!" thought Dick; "and I shall try to so conduct myself in future that I shall continue to be entitled to it!"

"Well, I guess it was a false alarm, this time," said General Howe; "the old peddler was an old peddler, after all, I guess—though it was somewhat remarkable that an old and apparently infirm man should thrash seven of the king's soldiers!"

"But he had a stout stick, your excellency, and one blow from it was sufficient to place a man hors de combat."

"I know that, but one would have thought seven men more than a match for one old, decrepit man, even though he had two sticks."

"True, your excellency; but probably the old man was, though weak in the legs, still very strong in the arms and able to administer lusty blows. I have known such instances."

"Oh, yes, and I guess it was so in this instance. Well, to return to the business which brings us together. When shall we make our move?"

This started another discussion which lasted perhaps half an hour.

They were still of various opinions.

At last General Howe said he would leave it to be decided by vote.

This was done, and presently the result of the voting was announced.

It had been decided to move on the 12th, which would be Monday.

And this was Thursday night, of the 9th.

"Good!" thought Dick; "I'm glad they finally decided it. Now I shall have some information of a positive character to take to General Washington."

Dick listened eagerly to the conversation which ensued.

The men talked freely.

They never dreamed that a "rebel" spy was listening to every word.

They discussed the ways and means.

They talked everything over in detail.

Dick made copious notes.

He was a youth with a wonderful memory.

It was never necessary for him to make written ones.

He could remember everything that was said.

It was this which made him such a valuable spy.

He never forgot anything that he heard.

And the details, as talked over, would give General Washington a splendid insight into the proposed movements of the British troops.

Suddenly Dick was given a shock.

A cough sounded close at hand!

His heart gave a leap and then seemed to stand still!

CHAPTER V.

DISCOVERED.

Some one was in the same room with him!

This realization came to the youth and gave him a start.

The person, whoever it was, had doubtless been in the room all the time.

This gave Dick the idea that the person had been asleep when he entered.

He might not be awake, even now.

Dick hoped not.

It would be bad if he should be discovered.

It would precipitate a combat.

The noise of the combat would attract the attention of the men in the adjoining room.

They would come in to see what the trouble was, and Dick would be doubtless made a prisoner.

Dick held his breath and listened eagerly.

Again came the cough.

The men in the other room heard it.

"I hear General Cornwallis coughing," said Howe; "wonder if he is awake?"

Cornwallis!

Dick realized that he was in the room with the English commander, Cornwallis!

"I don't know," replied one of the men; "shall I see your excellency? Do you wish to see him?"

"He said to call him when he had been asleep three hours. The time is almost up, and if he is awake he will wish to know what we have decided upon."

"So he will; I will go and see if he is awake."

"Do so."

There came the sound of footsteps.

Then, the next instant, the door at which Dick was stationed was opened.

It came open quickly.

Dick did not have time to get away.

He stood for a moment as if paralyzed.

The man who had opened the door recoiled as if he had seen a ghost.

"The old peddler!" he gasped.

"The old peddler!" escaped the lips of the other officers in chorus.

"They, too, stood and stared as if paralyzed.

Strange to say, Dick had not thought that the men would open this door.

His idea had been that the man would go out in the hall.

and enter through the doorway by which Dick had entered.

This would give him a few moments in which to hide.

But now there was no chance to hide.

He was discovered.

Dick realized that he was in a tight place.

Already the officers realized that the old peddler was a spy in disguise.

The next words given utterance to proved this.

"A spy!" gasped General Howe.

"A spy!" cried three or four of the others in chorus.

"It's Dick Slater!" cried Howe; "seize him, men—seize him!"

This aroused the men from their lethargy.

They leaped forward, intent on seizing Dick.

But he had recovered from the shock the surprise had given him quicker than the British officers had.

As the men started to leap forward, Dick turned and leaped across the room he was in.

The light shone in from the room the officers were in.

It revealed to Dick's sight a man sitting on the edge of a bed at one side of the room.

The man was General Cornwallis.

He saw Dick and seemed to understand the situation.

He leaped up and seized his sword.

"Stop!" he cried; "stop! or I will run you through!"

But Dick would not be stopped by words.

He was determined to escape if possible.

He would take desperate chances.

He felt confident that if he was captured he would be put to death.

He had done so much work against the British that the feeling was high against him.

And now he had become possessed of more valuable information.

The British officers would scarcely be willing to take any chances.

This time, if captured, he would be shot or strung up without delay.

At least this is what Dick thought.

It would not do for him to be captured, anyway.

So instead of stopping when commanded to do so by Cornwallis, he kept right on going.

Cornwallis was evidently in earnest.

He struck at Dick with his sword.

Had the blow taken effect, Dick would have been killed on the spot.

But the youth was very quick.

He dodged and made a quick leap to one side.

He escaped the stroke by a hair's breadth.

Then he darted toward the door.

He had closed the door as he came in.

This made it necessary to lose a few seconds in order to get the door open.

And this gave Cornwallis a second opportunity to strike at Dick with his sword.

He made use of the opportunity.

As Dick jerked the door open, he struck at the youth again.

And again Dick escaped the stroke by leaping to one side and slightly backward.

This was dangerous, too, as the officers were approaching from the rear.

Dick had to take the chances, however.

It would have been sure death to have tried to leap through the doorway as he jerked the door open.

So he had to jerk the door open, leap backward and to one side and trust to luck to get the chance to escape through the doorway afterward.

The redcoat officers coming from the rear were almost upon Dick.

They thought they had him sure.

They stretched out their hands to seize him.

But they were just an instant too late.

The youth had again leaped forward and escaped their grasp.

The point of Cornwallis' sword had struck the floor and had stuck there the last time he struck at Dick, and he was pulling and tugging in a vain effort to disengage the sword.

So he was not in shape to strike another blow at the youth, and Dick succeeded in getting through the doorway.

But could he escape?

The chances seemed very slim.

"After him!" almost shrieked General Howe; "fifty pounds to the man who captures him!"

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE ROOF.

Dick knew he had a task ahead of him.

But he did not despair.

He had been in tight places before.

And as a rule he had managed to get out of them.

He was determined to do so this time, if such a thing was possible.

As Dick reached the hallway he turned and ran toward the front door.

He thought that he might have time to try the front door.

If it should prove to be unlocked, he might escape quite easily.

But a glance showed him that there was a soldier on guard there.

The soldier had heard the disturbance.

He could not have helped hearing it.

Doubtless he had heard the words shouted by General Howe.

Especially the last ones, where the worthy general offered fifty pounds to the man who would capture the fugitive.

The soldier doubtless felt that fifty pounds would be very acceptable to him.

So as Dick came toward him, he advanced to meet the youth.

"Halt!" he cried, presenting his musket; "halt and surrender!"

But Dick was not disposed to submit to capture just yet.

"Don't shoot! I surrender!" he cried.

The words threw the soldier off his guard.

He supposed the words were given utterance to in good faith.

It looked as if it would be the height of folly for the fugitive not to surrender.

But he was quickly undeceived.

Dick believed that everything was fair in war.

So he could see no wrong in deceiving the soldier by calling out that he surrendered.

The instant after he so called out, he made a quick leap to one side, knocked the musket up, and, seizing it with his left hand, he dealt the soldier a blow alongside the jaw with his fist.

The blow was a strong one, and the soldier went down with a crash.

He was not expecting such a thing.

Before he could regain his feet, Dick had leaped up the stairway.

The officers, with the enraged Lord Cornwallis at their head, were out in the hallway, now.

They had been just in time to see Dick knock the soldier down.

"After him!" shouted Lord Cornwallis; "don't let the desperate scoundrel escape! After him!"

And after Dick the officers came.

"Fire upon him!" yelled General Howe. "Stop him, at whatever cost! Don't let him get away!"

They were not going to let Dick get away, if they could help it.

When Dick reached the head of the stairs he darted along the hallway.

He did not dare stop to look for an avenue of escape here.

He must go on up to the top floor.

He reached the attic stairs and darted up them.

He was soon in the room he had left an hour or so before.

When there before Dick had noticed that there was a window in a sort of gable.

It was his idea now to open the window and get out on the roof.

He might then be able to get to the ground in some manner.

Nothing better offered, anyway, so he decided to at least get out on the roof if he could.

He hastened to the window and tried it.

The window refused to open.

Dick heard the footsteps and voices of his pursuers.

They were coming as fast as they could.

They would be upon him in a few moments.

Dick gave another fierce pull at the window and it came open.

Dick looked out.

A quick survey convinced him that he could maintain his position on the roof.

There was no time to spare.

The pursuers would be in the room in a few moments.

Dick climbed out.

He was very careful, as a fall to the ground would surely have been fatal.

He was three full stories up.

He was not an instant too soon.

Just as he disappeared through the window the foremost of the officers appeared in the room.

It was quite dark in the room, but it was possible to see through the open window.

The officer realized the truth instantly.

The fugitive had gone out through the window.

The leading officer rushed over and stuck his head out.

Thump!

He got a rap over the head from the butt of one of Dick's pistols that made him see stars.

He uttered a howl of pain.

"What's the matter, Sanford?" asked one of his companions.

In the darkness they had not seen what had occurred.

"Matter! Oh, great Christopher! but that scoundrel

rapped me over the head with the butt of a pistol! He nearly broke my skull!"

Dick was seated astride the gable.

He heard what was said.

"Keep your head inside!" he called out. "I will put a bullet through the head of the next man who is so foolish as to stick it out!"

"Did you hear that?" asked the man addressed as Sanford.

"He's a desperate fellow!" said another.

Dick's threat was not without effect.

No one stuck his head out.

Each and every fellow had too great a regard for his head to take any chances on getting it punctured by a bullet.

"You'd better surrender!" called out one.

"Do you think so?" asked Dick, in a mocking tone.

"Yes, I do!"

"Well, I don't!"

"You 'd better!"

"I don't think so!"

"Well, you will be captured very soon, or killed. You might as well save us all the trouble."

"I will make you all the trouble I can," said Dick; "that is my business in life these days!"

"Well, you'll stop doing it very soon!"

"I may and I may not!"

Dick's tone was full of dauntless courage.

There was no tremor there.

He had not given up hope, by any means.

True, he was in a bad situation.

But he had been in bad situations before.

He might escape.

True, he saw no way of effecting his escape, just at present, but an opportunity might come.

He would hold out to the last moment, and watch for the opportunity.

The men within the room doubtless realized that it useless to try to get the fugitive to surrender.

No more was heard from them—at least not for a time.

Dick would have been glad to know what they were doing.

But he did not dare try to look in through the window.

He was sure there was one or more of the fellows on guard, and at the first sight of his head, they would do their best to put a bullet through it.

And Dick had no desire to have his head percolated by a bullet.

Dick's position was anything but a pleasant one.

Indeed it was a very dangerous one.

He was seated astride the little, peaked gable, and back of him was a sloping roof.

He was not sure that he could climb up this sloping roof, if he were to try.

And he was not sure it would benefit him any were he to do so.

So what was he to do?

The youth asked himself this question.

But he was unable to answer it.

Obviously he would have to let circumstances govern his actions.

There was no other course for him to pursue.

But he was in a bad situation, and he could not ignore the truth.

Dick wondered what the men would do next.

Would they try to get at him through the window?

This seemed to be the most reasonable supposition.

It really seemed as though there was no other way of getting at him.

But how would they manage it?

Dick could not imagine.

There was one thing they could do, however.

They could place guards around the house and wait till morning.

Then they could either force him to surrender, or they could shoot him as the hunter would a squirrel up a tree.

This was not very pleasant to think of.

But that it was the plan the redcoats had decided to follow Dick presently decided.

He was led to believe this by the fact that no attempt was being—so far as he could tell—made to capture him.

"I guess that is to be their scheme," thought Dick; "I'm in for an all night roost up here!"

But Dick was not the youth to "roost" there all night and wait to be shot in the morning.

That would be the last thing he would do.

If that was the game the redcoats were going to play, he was very well pleased.

It would give him lots of time in which to work, and he would work, too.

"I will find some way to get down from here and away before morning!" thought Dick.

CHAPTER VII.

DICK A TARGET.

But how was he to accomplish it?

That was the question.

And it was the question Dick would have to answer.

He was busy thinking.

Dick's brain was active at all times.

It was never idle.

And in times of danger it was unusually active.

He was turning over plans for escaping, and mentally weighing them in the balance.

Presently his attention was attracted to the street forty feet below.

He heard voices down there.

The lights shining out through the windows of the rooms on the lower floor, made it possible for him to distinguish objects fairly well.

He saw forms moving about.

"It is my redcoat friends," thought Dick; "and they have come out to see if they can get sight of me."

Dick wondered if it could be possible that the men who had chased him into the attic would have all gone back down.

If they had done so, he would climb back into the attic room.

His position was anything but pleasant or comfortable.

But he hardly thought such a thing possible as that they would all go down.

They would leave one or two of their number on guard, to prevent him from re-entering through the window.

Still, they might have all gone back down, Dick thought, and he decided to find out whether or not this was the case.

He leaned forward until his mouth was just above the top of the window.

"Hello, in there!" he called.

There was no reply.

Dick's heart leaped.

Had they all gone back downstairs, then, after all?

He called again.

"Well, what do you want?" came the reply this time.

Dick's hopes were dashed.

"Oh, nothing in particular," replied Dick; "I was feeling lonesome, that is all, and wished to know that I was not all alone."

A hoarse laugh came back up to Dick's ears.

"You are a cool one!" said a voice in a tone of admiration.

"Oh, it's quite cool and pleasant up here, thank you!" replied Dick. "Better come up and join me!"

"Much obliged; but I think I shall be more comfortable down here."

A thrill went over Dick.

"There is only one man down there," he thought; "now,

if I could only get in there and get a chance at him before he could get a chance to shoot, I would speedily overcome him. Then escape would at least be possible."

This thought gave Dick courage.

He might be able to accomplish this.

The man might get drowsy; might even go to sleep.

Then he could climb back into the attic room and make the fellow prisoner almost before he knew what had happened.

Then Dick's attention was attracted to the people down in the street.

"I wonder what they can accomplish there?" he asked himself. He was sure they could do nothing.

He had nothing to fear from them.

To prevent immediate capture, all that he needed to do was to watch the window and see to it that no one came out through it.

Dick soon found that he was threatened with another danger besides that of being captured, however.

Suddenly the sound of a pistol shot was heard.

Zip—spat!

Something struck the toe of Dick's shoe.

The impact was so severe that the youth's leg was thrown up in the air a couple of feet, at least.

He came within an ace of being thrown off the building!

By seizing hold of the end of the gable and holding on with all his strength he was enabled to regain his balance.

"Great guns!" thought Dick; "a bullet hit the toe of my shoe!"

Crack!

Another pistol shot rang out.

Zip!

Dick heard the bullet go singing upward!

The bullet did not miss him much more than a foot.

"I don't like this!" thought Dick.

He would not have thought it possible for anyone to shoot so straight in the darkness.

He realized that the men who chased him out on the roof had told where he was, however, and even though the marksmen below could not see him, they knew just about where he was, and could aim accordingly.

And some of these chance shots might hit Dick!

The youth realized this.

And he did not like it at all.

But what was he to do?

It seemed impossible for him to do anything.

There he was and he could not get away.

He would have to remain and pose as an invisible target

for invisible marksmen until said marksmen should grow tired and stop shooting of their own accord.

The outlook was not a pleasant one.

Dick was determined he would not be killed by a chance shot if he could help it.

The roof back of him was sloping.

Then he stuck his leg out to the right and to the left as far as he could, and kept them from projecting over the edge of the roof.

Thus he afforded the marksmen but little in the way of a target.

He would have furnished them even less had it been possible.

The shooting was becoming more frequent, now.

The attempt to puncture the body of the "rebel" spy with bullets was becoming a popular sport among the redcoats.

They seemed vieing with one another as to which should fire the greater number of shots in a given length of time.

The shooting became a fusillade.

Occasionally a bullet would strike the wood at the top of the gable astride which Dick sat, and splinters were thrown in the air and came down in Dick's face.

This was far from being pleasant.

But the splinters were not so bad as the bullets would have been.

So Dick congratulated himself on this, anyway.

Spat!

Something struck the roof right beside Dick's head.

He felt over at about the point where the "spat" sounded from.

There was a hole there as large as the end of his finger.

Dick understood what had happened.

One of the bullets had been fired so nearly straight upward, that it had come back down and had struck the roof within six inches of Dick's head.

Had it struck Dick it would have killed him as surely as though it had hit him in going upward.

Gravity gives a small, heavy object like a bullet great force in coming back to the earth, after becoming spent in the air.

This was a danger Dick had not calculated on.

But it was none the less real.

He was threatened from both below and above.

"Well, I can't help it, so all there is for me to do is to make the best of the situation," thought Dick.

So he steeled his nerves and lay there calmly.

It would be only by a mere chance if a bullet struck him.

And he would have to take the chances.

Crack, crack, crack, crack, crack!

The fusillade continued with unabated vigor.

The marksmen below were not yet tired of the sport.

It sounded much like the firing in the beginning of a battle.

"They're wasting a big lot of valuable ammunition!" thought Dick, grimly.

But the redcoats had plenty of ammunition.

The thought that they were wasting it never entered their heads, doubtless.

They could not consider it wasted when they were having so much sport.

It was more fun than hunting foxes in "Old England."

"I wish they would quit!" thought Dick.

The redcoats had been firing for nearly an hour, now.

He could hear the sounds of voices far below him, but did not dare look down.

To have looked would have been to seal his death warrant.

Bullets were flying upward constantly.

Dick grew tired of this presently.

He suddenly bethought himself that he had a pair of pistols.

Drawing his pistols, he cocked them, and taking advantage of a momentary lull in the firing, he quickly stuck the pistols out, pointed them downward, and pulled the triggers.

Crack, crack! went the weapons.

Then loud and angry yells came up from below.

"I guess I must have hit some one," thought Dick, grimly; "well, I hate to do it, but they have brought it on themselves. They have been trying their hardest to kill me, and it is only right and proper that I should retaliate. One thing, if I don't kill any of them, I will make them scatter and seek shelter. Each and every man will think he may receive the next bullet, and all will be afraid to remain out in the open street.

The fusillade was renewed with even greater vigor, seemingly.

The redcoats were anxious to get revenge, doubtless, for Dick's shots had both taken effect, seriously wounding two of the marksmen on the ground.

Dick proceeded to reload his pistols.

He had some powder and bullets in a secret pocket, and it did not take him long to reload the weapons.

Then he seized upon a favorable opportunity and fired both pistols as he had done before.

And again loud yells of anger came up to the youth's ears.

"I guess I must have hit some one again!" thought Dick.

"Well, I'll keep it up, and maybe they will get tired and quit."

This was likely to prove to be the case.

The redcoats were out in the street and below the youth, thus affording a splendid target for even chance shooting, while Dick was high up and was well sheltered by the edge of the roof.

The redcoats kept up a fusillade for a short time after Dick had fired; then, when it was about time for him to fire again, the firing below suddenly ceased.

Dick thought he understood the situation.

The redcoats, fearing to risk the shots which they expected to hear fired at any moment, had stopped shooting and retired to a place of safety.

"Well, that is all right," thought Dick; "that suits me very well. I am willing to have hostilities cease, even though I could probably do them more harm than they could do me. Even if I were to kill a dozen of them, however, and should then be killed myself, or seriously wounded, it would not be a paying affair for me, so I hope they will stay under cover and not begin again."

All was silence for a few minutes.

The stillness seemed almost oppressive after such a plentitude of noise.

Still, it was a welcome relief to Dick.

It relieved the tension on his nerves.

"Hello, up there!" presently came a voice from within the attic room.

"Hello, yourself!" replied Dick.

"Are you wounded?"

"No, I'm not wounded!" the youth replied.

Dick heard the questioner give utterance to a grunt expressive of surprise.

"Well, you must bear a charmed life!" the redcoat said.

"They did fire a few shots at me, sure enough, didn't they!" said Dick, quietly.

"A few! They must have fired a thousand!"

"While I fired only four and put them to flight!"

"Well, you see, you had the advantage of position."

"So I did; and that is considerable, I will admit."

"You can't escape, though."

"You think not?"

"I think so! In fact, I know so!"

"You mean you think you know."

"No, I know."

"Wait and see."

Dick's tone was cool and confident.

More so than he felt.

But he would not let the redcoat know that he had fears regarding the matter.

He would keep up a bold front.

"I suppose we will have to wait till morning, unless you surrender sooner—and that is what——"

"I shall not do!"

Dick spoke positively.

"You had better!"

"No!"

"It will save you lots of discomfort and us lots of trouble."

"The latter is what you are thinking of."

"Well, I admit it; but what can you gain by remaining up there all night?"

"I don't know; perhaps much."

"You know you can gain nothing."

"I don't know anything of the kind, and neither do you!"

"I do! You will be captured in the morning, sure!"

"Perhaps so."

"There is no 'perhaps' about it."

"Isn't there?"

"No!"

"Wait and see!"

"Well, as I remarked before, I suppose we shall be forced to do so if you persist, as no one with any brains would venture to try to get out there at you in the darkness."

"Any one who did try to get out here would lose his brains!" said Dick, calmly; "I would put a bullet through his head!"

"But what's the use? You'll be captured in the morning."

"I am not so sure of it."

"Then you will be shot. When it comes daylight, the sharpshooters of the regiments will pick you off, as they would a squirrel out of a tree!"

"We'll wait and see!"

The redcoat gave utterance to a muttered curse, but said no more.

He saw that it would do no good.

"He'd like to persuade me to surrender!" thought Dick.

"But I'll not surrender, until after all hope of escaping is gone. This fellow may doze off, some time during the night and give me the chance I am looking for. I'll wait and watch."

Suddenly the stillness was broken by the sharp, whip-like cracks of two or three pistol shots.

And thud—thud! Dick heard the bullets strike in the roof right beside him.

"Great guns!" he thought; "where did those shots come from?"

And then in a flash he realized where they came from, and he realized that he was exposed to a terrible danger.

Some of the redcoats had climbed to the attic room of the house on the opposite side of the street and were firing across at him.

CHAPTER VIII.

STILL IN DANGER.

Dick could see the flashes as the pistols were fired.

This had enabled him to locate the marksmen.

Of course, it was so dark the redcoats could not see him, but they knew where he was, and would very likely succeed in hitting him before very long.

Dick feared they might, at any rate.

What should he do?

What could he do?

Dick asked himself these questions.

But there seemed no answer to them.

It seemed as though he would have to remain and take his chances.

Crack, crack, crack, crack, crack!

Again the shots rang out.

And again the bullets spat about, striking in the roof near Dick.

"They will be sure to hit me before much longer!" thought Dick; "I must get away from here in some manner."

He turned and looked up the sloping roof behind him.

It was about twelve feet to the top of the roof where the peak was.

Could he reach the top? Dick asked himself.

And if he succeeded in doing so, what good would it do?

Perhaps he might be able to get down on the other side, he thought.

One thing was sure, he must do something.

And at once.

Otherwise he would be killed or wounded.

This, of course, Dick did not wish to have occur.

He felt that he would much rather fall and kill himself while trying to escape than to sit and be shot.

"You had better surrender!" called the voice of the man within the attic room.

"Never!" cried Dick. "I will stay here and die, but I won't surrender!"

"You're a fool!" came back from the redcoat.

"Thank you!" said Dick.

His tone was cool and calm.

The British soldier within the room noted this fact.

In spite of himself a feeling of admiration for the "rebel" outside rose in his breast.

"That is certainly the bravest man I ever saw!" he thought.

Again the pistol shots rang out from across the street.

And again Dick heard the thud—thud! of the bullets as they struck near by.

"That settles it!" thought Dick, as he felt one of the bullets cut through his coat sleeve; "I must get away from here."

When Dick decided to do a thing, he never delayed about trying to do it.

He knew it would be useless to try to climb the sloping roof with his shoes on.

So he quietly pulled them off and threw them into the street.

Then he did likewise with his stockings.

He was now barefooted.

As a barefooted boy he had done considerable climbing about on the roofs of his father's house, and on the roof of the stable, and he felt that he might be able to reach the point where the roof came to a point.

He was ready, now.

And he did not delay.

He could see the peak of the roof where it was outlined against the sky.

Cautiously he worked his way up, until he was standing with his feet on the top of the gable.

His hands were resting on the sloping roof, and his face was toward the roof.

At this instant came the crack, crack! of the pistols, as the marksmen across the way fired another volley.

The bullets spat here and there on the roof, some of them coming dangerously near to Dick.

"Now is my time!" thought Dick, "before they have time to reload and fire again."

He glanced up toward the peak of the roof.

It seemed a long ways off.

But no matter.

He would reach it or die trying!

He gathered himself together and steeled his nerves for the task.

He knew he was taking desperate chances.

If he should slip and fall he would go to the street forty feet below.

The fall would be fatal.

He could not hope to fall such a distance and live.

But he would not fall.

Dick was determined to succeed in the attempt.

Suddenly he leaped forward and upward.

He ran up the sloping roof as fast as he could go.

He was almost to the top, when his foot slipped.

He started to fall.

Instinctively he threw up his hands.

He grasped the peak of the roof.

He held on with all his strength.

He thought for a few moments that he would be unable to save himself from falling and rolling down the roof and off and down to the street.

But he managed to hold on.

And then, slowly and by degrees he pulled himself up, until he was lying across the peak of the roof.

And just then the marksmen on the opposite side of the street fired another volley.

Again Dick escaped injury.

He felt that he was very lucky.

But would he continue to be lucky?

He hoped so.

Dick looked down the sloping roof on the opposite side from where he had been.

At a point opposite where the gable was in which he had sat for so long was another gable.

"I must not remain up here on top of the peak," thought Dick; "I will be struck by a bullet sooner or later, sure! I wonder if I can get down to that gable?"

He felt that it was absolutely necessary that he should do so.

For aught he knew to the contrary, his body might be outlined against the horizon plainly enough so that the marksmen on the opposite side of the street might be able to make it out even dark as it was, and in that case they would be able to take aim, with the result that he would be sure to be hit by a bullet.

Dick was ready to take the risk of getting down to the gable.

He must do it.

It was a case of do or die.

He felt that it would be wise to get down as quickly as possible if he was to get down at all.

He pulled himself up and managed to get his body over onto the other side of the roof.

Then, still holding to the peak, he let himself down till he extended at full length, his feet being then perhaps six or seven feet from the gable.

It was Dick's intention to slide down to the gable.

He hoped to catch against it with his feet and stop himself in time so that he would not go on over the edge and down to the ground.

There was more than a chance that he might go over and down to his death.

But no matter.

He would risk it.

It was a necessary risk.

"Nothing risked, nothing gained."

And Dick knew he would not win his freedom and escape without taking desperate risks.

So he took careful aim, and letting go his hold of the peak, went sliding down the sloping roof.

He would not have thought that he would gain such momentum in sliding such a short distance.

The thought flashed through his mind that he would be unable to stop himself.

He thought that he would go over the edge of the roof and fall to the ground and his death.

But he made a desperate effort and caught his feet against the top of the little window gable.

As luck would have it, his feet caught just right.

His descent was stayed, was almost stopped.

Not quite, however.

His feet slipped off the top of the gable and went over.

He came on down, and, alighting astride the top of the gable, he managed to stop and hold himself from going over.

It was a narrow escape, however.

But a miss is as good as a mile.

He had accomplished the feat and he was satisfied.

He waited a few moments to recover his nerve.

The experience which he had just gone through was well calculated to shake the nerve of an iron man.

And Dick's nerves, while as strong as the nerves of a human being could possibly be, were scarcely iron-like.

Presently Dick recovered his accustomed calmness and was ready for further adventures.

He bent over and looked down.

There was a window in the gable, as was the case on the opposite side.

Dick reached over and pushed against the window.

The window was on hinges, like a door, and it gave and swung inward.

Dick's heart gave a throb of delight.

"I think I can get into that room!" he thought.

He felt sure the window was in an attic room like the one he had escaped from.

If he could get in there he might be able to surprise the redcoat, who would not be looking for him from that side and make the fellow a prisoner!

Then he thought it possible that he might make his escape!

Dick decided to try it, anyway.

CHAPTER IX.

A DESPERATE STRUGGLE.

Dick acted at once.

He pushed the window open.

He was very careful to make no noise.

He knew that much—his very life, doubtless, depended on the success of the attempt which he was about to make. Therefore he was very careful.

At last the window was back as far as it would go.

Now came a difficult task at any time, and under any circumstances.

But under the present circumstances, where absolute silence was a requisite, it was doubly difficult.

We refer to the task of getting over and in through the window.

But after what he had already gone through on this night, Dick did not falter.

He began work at once.

He took his time.

He could hear the crack, crack, crack! of the weapons of the marksmen on the other side of the street, and felt sure the attention of the man in the attic room would be kept to the other side.

This was favorable to Dick.

The noise of the firearms, too, would serve to cover any little noise he might make in getting into the attic room.

Dick got as good a grasp of the edges of the little gable as he could, and then, slowly and carefully let his body down over until his feet were in a position to be poked through the window.

Then he stuck them through and managed to gradually follow them with his body.

He came very near losing his hold with his hands once, but hung on, and presently succeeded in getting his body entirely through the window.

He was in the attic room!

It was dark in there.

But Dick knew it adjoined the one the redcoat guard was in.

There must be a connecting door, he thought.

He stole carefully across the floor, feeling his way.

He struck the other wall presently.

It did not take him long to find the door.

It was, as he had expected to find it, closed.

He hoped it was not locked.

If it was locked, and the key was on the other side, or gone entirely, he would be in a fix.

He carefully tried the door.

To his joy he found it unlocked.

"Good!" he thought; "now I will see what I can do!"

He pulled the door open half an inch.

The smell of tobacco smoke came to his nostrils.

"He is taking a smoke and enjoying himself," thought Dick.

He peeped through the crack.

The other attic room was lighted by a candle.

Seated over at the opposite side of the room from where Dick stood was the redcoat.

He had his back toward Dick.

He was smoking and taking things easy.

He doubtless thought that by the time the marksmen got through shooting across at the roof of the house, there would be but very little left of the rebel spy.

He would have been surprised had he known that the "rebel" spy was within ten feet of him at that very moment!

Doubtless he would have dropped his pipe.

Dick slowly and carefully pulled the door open.

He hoped the door would not creak on its hinges.

He was afraid it might.

Doubtless it was not used much, and such doors are likely to creak on being opened.

His fears were realized.

Just as he had got the door open far enough to permit the passage of his body it creaked.

The redcoat took the pipe out of his mouth and looked back over his shoulder.

When his eyes fell on Dick, the pipe did drop to the floor, sure enough.

A cry of surprise escaped him.

He started to leap to his feet.

But Dick was too quick for him.

He leaped forward with the leap of a panther.

He seized the startled redcoat by the throat.

Then a terrible struggle began.

The redcoat was a large and powerful man.

But Dick was strong, too.

Still, it is doubtful whether he could have held his own with this stalwart fellow, had he not had the advantage of taking him by surprise and at somewhat of a disadvantage.

This equalized matters somewhat.

Still, it was very soon evident that it was going to be a terrible struggle.

But Dick was made supernaturally strong by desperation.

He was fighting for life and liberty.

Therefore he fought more furiously than a man might be expected to fight who had no such incentive to do his best.

Around and about they moved.

Each was doing his best.

But Dick had secured a grip on the redcoat's throat, and he held on with all the tenacity of a bulldog.

He knew that if he could compress the fellow's windpipe for the space of a minute and a half the man would have to succumb.

So he made all his efforts in this direction.

The big fellow did his best to get hold of Dick's throat.

But Dick would not allow this.

He pressed his chin down on his chest so tightly the fellow could not get his hand underneath the chin.

Then the redcoat tried to throw Dick to the floor.

But here, too, he met with but poor success.

Dick was a natural athlete.

It was a difficult matter to get him off his feet.

He seemed to possess the catlike faculty of always 'lighting on his feet.

The big fellow made three or four desperate efforts to get Dick down, and then his strength began failing him, as he felt his breath leaving him.

He was now forced to take the defensive.

He would have to get Dick's hands loose from his throat.

If he did not do this he would soon be forced to succumb.

He realized this, and, seizing Dick's wrists, tried to tear the youth's hands loose.

He only made it worse for himself, for Dick squeezed the tighter, and held on with a determination that was a revelation to the redcoat.

He realized that he was dealing with one who was a dangerous opponent for any man.

They still moved here and there about the room.

It was a terrible struggle.

Dick said nothing.

The redcoat could say nothing.

So the combat was waged in absolute deadly silence.

The redcoat was now red in the face.

Almost as red as his coat.

He was gasping for breath.

And he could not get it.

He began to stagger.

He was rapidly growing weak.

But Dick was taking no chances.

He held on and gripped the throat with the same tremendous grip.

Then the fellow tried to say something.

Of course he could not.

He looked at Dick, and there was a frightened, beseeching look in his eyes.

The look said as plainly as words, "Don't choke me to death! Spare my life!"

Dick so interpreted the look.

He was naturally a good-hearted youth.

He had no hatred for the British soldiers.

They were simply doing what they thought was right the same as he was doing in fighting for liberty.

He felt so sorry for the fellow.

The redcoat could not get his breath, but he could hear and understand.

"I am not going to kill you," said Dick, quietly; "I am going to merely choke you till you are insensible, and then make my escape, that is all. You need have no fears. I am not bloodthirsty; I have no desire to take your life."

Dick was sure he saw a grateful look in the man's eyes.

It was comforting to him, no doubt, to hear Dick say this.

It added considerable to his peace of mind.

Still, as he began to feel that he must get his breath or die, he began to struggle fiercely.

Perhaps the fear assailed him that Dick would not keep his word.

At any rate he struggled and fought with desperate energy.

But to no avail.

Dick had a grip on the fellow's throat which could not be shaken.

And the more the redcoat struggled, the worse it made it for him.

He was now getting weaker very rapidly.

He could not possibly last many seconds longer.

He seemed to realize it.

He turned his eyes to Dick appealingly.

Then with a gasp he relapsed into unconsciousness.

Dick waited a few moments until sure the fellow was insensible, and then he let go his grasp.

The redcoat sank to the floor, Dick supporting him, limp and apparently lifeless.

Dick had triumphed in the struggle.

Now to escape!

Could he do it?

Dick asked himself this question.

There was only one way to answer it—by making the attempt.

He decided to do this at once.

Delay would be dangerous.

Some of this man's comrades might come up into the attic at any moment.

Dick decided what to do on the instant.

He would change clothing with the insensible man.

Clad in the brilliant uniform of a British soldier, he would be much safer in making his way downstairs and out of the house than if he were dressed in his present costume of the old peddler.

The man was larger than he.

But what matter?

In the night time, and amid the excitement attendant upon the discovery of the spy, and the attempt to capture or kill him, the fit of clothes would not be noticed.

So Dick hastened to remove the redcoat's outer clothing.

Then he did the same with his own.

Then he donned the British uniform.

His old peddler disguise was much too large for him, as he had been padded and "made-up" to quite a considerable extent.

So he slipped the clothing on the insensible redcoat.

It went on without much trouble.

"Now to escape!" thought Dick.

He fancied this would be a difficult undertaking.

The inmates of the building were no doubt all up and stirring.

And they would be very wide awake.

Still, dressed up in the uniform of a British soldier, Dick hoped to be able to run the gauntlet successfully.

He could at least try.

He knew the insensible soldier would soon revive.

So to guard against trouble from him before he could get out of the house Dick bound and gagged the redcoat.

"Now he will be unable to let any one know what has happened," thought Dick.

Then he left the attic room and stole down the stairs leading to the second story.

He knew that now he was coming to the point where he would be in great danger.

But he did not hesitate.

He went boldly ahead.

He was relieved to find that there was nobody on the second floor.

When he reached the hallway and walked along it to the head of the stairs he saw that there were enough on the ground floor to make up for the lack of redcoats on the second floor.

The downstairs hallway was crowded.

Could Dick get down the stairs and through that crowd of his deadly enemies and escape from the house in safety?

The task seemed like an impossible one.

But Dick was determined to accomplish it.

He gritted his teeth and walked boldly down the stairs.

CHAPTER X.

RUNNING THE GAUNTLET.

The redcoats in the hallway below looked up at Dick.

His heart was in his mouth.

What if some of those who were looking up at him knew him?

He would be made a prisoner the moment he reached the foot of the stairs.

Dick preserved a calm countenance, however.

"Hello!" exclaimed one; "where have you been?"

"Up in the attic," replied Dick, coolly.

"Up in the attic?"

"Yes."

"What have you been doing up there?"

"What have I been doing up there?"

"Yes."

"Why, what should I be doing, but looking for the rebel spy, to be sure?"

"But the rest of us had orders to stay down from upstairs. Only the guard was to be up there."

"Well, I had instructions to go up."

Dick was perfectly cool and collected.

He had continued descending the stairs as he talked.

He reached the bottom of the stairs and made his way through the crowd.

"Hold on!" cried the one who had spoken.

Dick paused.

He felt that he would have to be very careful.

It would not do to betray too great haste to get out of the house.

It would doubtless make the redcoats suspect him.

"Well?"

Dick's tone was cool, though slightly impatient.

"Did you see anything of the spy up there?"

The tone of the redcoat was eager.

Dick realized that he, at least, did not suspect that the youth was other than what he seemed to be, i. e., one of them.

"How could I see anything of him?" he asked; "he's up on the roof."

"That's a fact, then, sure enough?"

"Of course it is!"

"Jove! he must be riddled by bullets by this time, then!"

"I shouldn't wonder."

"I'd hate to be in his place for a minute!"

"So would I!"

Then Dick walked onward.

It was slow work, however.

The hallway was crowded.

Others of the redcoats asked him questions, and this caused him to stop occasionally, as it would not have done to go rushing onward.

And unseemingly haste on his part would make them suspicious at once.

Dick worked his way along, however, and presently came to the end of the hall.

There were doors at each side.

He turned to one of the soldiers.

"Do you know which door opens into the kitchen?" he asked.

"The kitchen?"

The redcoat seemed surprised.

Dick nodded.

"Yes, the kitchen," he replied.

"Are you so hungry as all that?"

The redcoat laughed as he asked the question.

"I'm not hungry; but my comrade who is on watch up in the attic wished that I would come down and get him a lunch now, as it might be impossible to get one later on."

"Oh, I see; well, that's the kitchen door," and the redcoat pointed to the door on the left.

Dick turned the knob.

He opened the door and passed through into the room beyond.

He drew a breath of relief as he did so.

He had been on a strain while out in the hallway among the score or more redcoats, as may well be imagined.

It had been a severe ordeal.

But he had come through it with flying colors.

As he entered the kitchen he looked around.

There was but one person in the room.

The person in question was the cook—the woman who had befriended Dick in the first place, and who by letting him go upstairs into the attic had unwittingly caused all the trouble.

Dick was glad to see her there alone.

He was about to speak and reveal his identity, when a sudden thought came to him.

Might it not be better to not disclose his identity, in case she failed to recognize him?

She might turn against him, now that she knew he was a "rebel" spy.

He decided to not say anything.

That is, nothing that would serve to reveal his identity.

He thought it better thus.

The woman turned and looked at him as he entered.

"What d'ye want?" she asked.

"Nothing," replied Dick; "I want to get out of doors, that is all, and the hallway is so crowded that I decided to come out this way."

The woman looked at Dick searchingly.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"Me?"

Dick kept walking slowly across the room.

"Yes, you. Who are ye, I say?"

"I don't see what difference it makes to you who I am," said Dick; "but I will say that I am Harold Mortimer, of the king's army, at your service."

Dick, of course, spoke in a different tone of voice from what he had used in speaking to the cook when he was playing the part of the old peddler.

But the woman had sharper eyes and keener wits than Dick had supposed her to be possessed of.

A gleam of recognition came into her eyes.

"I know ye!" she suddenly exclaimed; "ye air thet spy, dressed up in soldier's clothes!"

Dick was taken somewhat aback.

He was afraid this might lead to serious complications.

If the woman took the notion to raise an alarm, he might be captured, even yet.

He was eager to escape.

He could afford to take no chances.

He would let nothing stand in his way.

He would first try pacific measures with the woman, and if those failed he would try force.

He held up his forefinger in a warning manner.

"Hist!" he said, in a low tone; "be careful! Don't talk so loud!"

"And why not?"

"Why? Some of those fellows out in the hall will hear you."

"I want 'em to hear me! I'm going to——"

She started toward the doorway through which Dick had just come.

"Wait!" cried Dick; "wait! I wish to speak to you."

The woman stopped.

"Well, say it quick!" she said.

"Don't arouse them in there," said Dick, indicating the door leading to the hall.

"And why should I not?"

"Because it is nothing to you whether I am captured or not."

"It isn't?"

"No; and I'll make it worth your while if you'll remain silent and not warn those fellows out there that I am about to escape them."

"Worth my while?"

"Yes."

"In what way?"

Dick reached in his pocket and drew forth several gold pieces.

"I will make you a present of those," he said, "if you will remain quiet and not raise an alarm."

The woman shook her head.

"You won't do it?"

"No, I don't want money. Ye deceived me. Ye came here pretending to be a peddler. Ye pretended to get suddenly sick, and persuaded me to let ye remain here over night. I let ye stay, an' what do ye turn out to be but a spy! No, ye deceived me, an' now I am going to tell the soldiers who an' what ye air!"

Dick saw the woman was in earnest.

She would certainly give the alarm unless prevented.

And Dick would not lift a hand to prevent her.

"It is war times, lady," said Dick; "otherwise I should never have deceived you. I am sorry to have done so, but all is fair in war."

With these words Dick made a leap for the outer door.

He jerked the door open and leaped out into the back yard.

He felt that he was taking big chances, but it was the only thing to do.

He did not dare remain in the kitchen a moment longer.

The woman was plainly determined to tell the redcoats in the hall that the spy was in the kitchen.

So Dick had to leap out and take his chances of leaping into the arms of British soldiers.

He found a plenty of them there.

He rushed right toward the crowd.

"Let me through!" he cried; "I am going on an important errand for General Howe!"

The soldiers parted and let him pass.

He was perhaps two-thirds of the way through, when the cook appeared at the kitchen door and cried out as loudly as she could:

"That is the rebel spy! Don't let him escape!"

CHAPTER XI.

DICK'S ESCAPE.

But Dick was determined to escape, anyway.

The redcoats did not seem to understand the woman's meaning.

They stood motionless and dumb.

They stared at her in open-mouthed amazement.

They did not know what to think.

The man who was hastening through their ranks was a British soldier without a doubt.

Did he not have on a British uniform?

The woman kept crying out that Dick was the "rebel spy," and calling on the redcoats to not let him escape, however, and they finally came to the conclusion that there might be something in what the woman was saying.

Having so decided, several made the attempt to stop Dick.

He had been making good use of the time, however.

He was almost through the crowd of redcoats.

And when they attempted to seize him, he struck out from the shoulder in rapid succession, and knocked three or four of the redcoats down.

Shouts and yells went up from the others who saw the affair, and curses went up from those who had been knocked down.

It was lively around there for a few moments.

And Dick made the most of his opportunity.

He got through the crowd and started to run with all his might.

Then some of the redcoats happened to think that they had pistols.

"Halt!" cried one of the soldiers; "halt! or you are a dead man!"

But Dick did not halt.

He was so near to making his escape that he would not have stopped if a regiment had stood there ready to fire upon him.

So he kept right on going.

Had it not been for the fact that a large bonfire was burning out in the yard, this making considerable light, Dick would have had nothing to fear, but now the redcoats would be able to take aim.

Dick knew this, but never thought of such a thing as halting.

Nothing short of a wound so serious as to make him unable to proceed would stop him.

Dick was listening, however, and when he heard a voice cry out, "Fire!" he threw himself forward on his face.

At the same instant the crack of the pistols was heard.

The bullets flew past Dick, going above him.

He leaped to his feet, then.

Again he leaped into a run, and fairly flew.

He wished to get out of the range of the light thrown by the bonfire before the redcoats could fire again.

He succeeded.

But when he heard the voice of the redcoat cry, "Fire!" he threw himself down, as he had done before.

He did not wish to take chances on being hit by a chance bullet.

As soon as the volley had been fired, he leaped to his feet again and sped onward.

He wished to get as good a start as he could before the British soldiers started in chase of him.

This was what they should have done at once, instead of trying to shoot him.

They seemed to realize their mistake, however, and a glance back over his shoulder showed Dick that they were starting in pursuit.

"I'll give them a big run, now, though!" thought Dick. "They'll not catch me."

Dick felt reasonably secure.

He was well in the lead, and was as swift a runner as could be found anywhere.

He felt himself competent to more than hold his own.

So he felt first rate as he ran onward.

He headed toward the country.

He wished to get out of the village as quickly as possible. He would not be safe so long as he was within the British lines.

There was a great hue and cry behind him from the pursuing redcoats.

But the sound of the voices gradually became fainter.

Dick was sure then that he was leaving his pursuers gradually behind.

This made him feel very well indeed.

At last he was out of the village.

He struck into a country road.

He ran along it as swiftly as he could.

He was somewhat winded, on account of his exertions, but managed to keep on going at a good pace.

He knew that if he was tired, his pursuers would also be tired.

Dick soon got his bearings.

Being well acquainted with the country, this was not difficult.

He struck across a field.

This would make it a "short cut" to where he had left his horse.

The horse was concealed in the woods, two miles from New Brunswick.

It did not take Dick long to reach the spot.

He soon found his horse there, safe and sound.

"Thank goodness he is still here!" thought Dick.

He quickly mounted.

Then he rode away.

He headed as straight for Middlebrook as he could go.

The distance was only about eight miles.

An hour and a half later he rode into the encampment of the patriot army.

He went at once to headquarters.

He wished to report to the commander-in-chief as quickly as possible.

Washington greeted Dick pleasantly, not to say eagerly.

He felt sure that Dick had learned something of importance.

And so he had.

The commander-in-chief told Dick to go ahead and tell what he had learned, and Dick did so.

The commander-in-chief walked the floor while Dick was talking.

There was an eager, interested look on his face and in his eyes.

"So they are going to move on Philadelphia on Monday, are they?" he remarked.

"Yes, sir; that was what they decided to do."

General Washington looked at Dick.

"What do you think, Dick?" he remarked, slowly; "now that they know a spy was present and overheard their conversation—do you think they will adhere to their plan? Do you think they will start, as they had decided to do?"

Dick pondered for a few moments.

Then he looked up.

"I think they will, your excellency," he said.

"You think so?"

"Yes, sir; I am confident they will adhere to their plans as outlined—but they may attempt some kind of a trick to throw you off your guard."

The commander-in-chief looked thoughtful.

"You think they will try to execute some sort of a maneuver calculated to make us think they have given up the idea of moving on Philadelphia, and then when they have gotten us off our guard, make the start, just as they had figured on doing?"

Dick nodded.

"That is what I believe they will do."

General Washington looked at Dick for a few moments in silence and then said:

"I doubt not that you are right. But what could they do?"

Dick was silent for a few moments, and then he replied:

"The most likely thing, to my way of thinking, is that they will make a pretense of giving up the plan."

Washington nodded.

"That is reasonable," he said.

"They will probably make a feint of returning to New York," went on Dick. "They may even send a part of a regiment out, as if it was starting back."

"That is a likely supposition," agreed the commander-in-chief.

Then a sudden thought struck Dick.

His eyes shone eagerly.

He looked at the commander-in-chief in such an eager manner as to attract the attention of the great man.

"Well, Dick," he said, quietly, "what is it?"

"I have an idea, your excellency."

"I am glad to hear that. What is your idea?"

"It is this, to take a sufficient number of men—say five or six hundred—and go and hide in the woods, close by the road along which the decoy troops would travel in starting toward New York. Then when they pass by, we could close in behind them and attack them from the sides, and force them to surrender very quickly."

Washington looked interested.

"That would be a neat trap, sure enough!" he said.

"So it would, your excellency; and I think that if we could set it, we should catch a nice lot of redcoats."

The commander-in-chief nodded.

"I rather think so myself," he acknowledged, and then he looked at Dick.

"I suppose you would like to have charge of this affair?" he remarked.

Dick's face flushed with pleasure, caused by the thought of being given such an important assignment as the command of the body of soldiers which would have to be sent. His eyes shone with pleasure and eagerness.

"I confess that I should be delighted to be given charge of the affair!" he said.

"Then it shall be so!" said the commander-in-chief; "it is your idea that the ruse would be tried by the British, but I think it will be tried, and, in case it is, you will be enabled to entrap a goodly number of the British; and if it should not be tried, no particular harm will be done."

"True, your excellency."

General Washington was silent for a few moments, and then he asked:

"How many men do you think you will require?"

Dick studied a few moments.

Then he said:

"I should judge that five hundred men would be sufficient."

"You think that number will be sufficient, do you?"

"Yes, your excellency; you see, we shall take the British entirely by surprise, and that will count for as much as though we had double the number of men, and the enemy knew of our presence and was ready for us."

"True; well, when do you think of going to the point in question and taking up your position? In other words, when will you set your trap?"

"I should think that Sunday night would be the proper time, your excellency."

"You do not think they will make the feint of a return to New York before Monday, then?"

"No, your excellency; I think they will wait till the day decided upon for moving on Philadelphia, and then, instead of starting in that direction, they will start three or four companies toward New York, hoping to throw you off your guard, through attracting your attention in that direction; then, this done, they will make the move toward Philadelphia."

The commander-in-chief said he thought as Dick did.

So it was decided that on Sunday evening Dick should take the five hundred men—his company of "Liberty Boys" and four other companies—and go and take up his position as he had decided upon.

"And I hope you will succeed in making a good catch in your trap, Dick, my boy!" said the commander-in-chief, when they had finished their conversation.

"I hope so, your excellency!" said Dick.

Then he saluted and withdrew.

CHAPTER XII.

SETTING THE TRAP.

Dick went to his quarters and lay down.

He was soon asleep, and rested well till morning.

Next morning he told the "Liberty Boys" what it had been decided to do.

They were eager and excited.

The affair promised something in the way of lively work.

And that was what they wished.

They could endure anything better than idleness.

They wished to be up and doing.

Then they asked Dick for the story of his adventures at New Brunswick.

Dick gave them a brief history of the affair, dwelling as lightly as possible on the dangers through which he had passed.

The youths read between the lines, however.

They realized that Dick had undergone one of the most exciting, thrilling and dangerous experiences of his career since becoming a spy.

They uttered exclamations of amazement when he told of how he had been made a target of while sitting astride the little window gable on top of the house used as headquarters by the British generals.

They could not understand how he had escaped.

"Well, you see, it was dark and they could not see me," explained Dick; "and the result was that the chance shooting did not have much chance of doing execution."

The youths could not get done talking about Dick's adventure, seemingly, however.

It was the principal topic of conversation in the company during the day.

And the news spread throughout the encampment.

News does spread in an army encampment with wonderful rapidity.

All knew and liked Dick.

So scores of the members of other companies came over to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys" that day, and congratulated Dick on his wonderful escape.

Dick thanked them for their kind words, but was very modest when talking of his adventure.

Sunday afternoon Dick selected the four companies which he desired to take in addition to his own company of "Liberty Boys," and as soon as it had become dark, they mounted their horses and rode away.

There was no real need that they should go so early in the evening, but Dick thought it best to go, and take plenty of time in selecting their position.

He did not want that there should be any failure of his scheme.

He wished to set a trap that would prove to be perfect-working in every way.

And by having plenty of time in which to do the work, he would be better able to make sure of this.

When time presses, and one is in a hurry, there is likelihood that mistakes may be made.

The five companies of patriot soldiers rode eastward a distance of ten miles.

Then they rode southward nearly two miles.

They were on the road that the British would traverse going to New York.

The road was bordered on both sides by heavy timber.

This would afford the finest kind of a hiding-place for Dick's men.

Dick selected a place, and they went into camp for the night.

It was Dick's idea to be up bright and early next morning and get his men in position by daylight.

This plan was carried out to the letter.

Guards were out, of course, during the night, and the men were aroused two hours before sun up.

They had brought lunch with them, and, after eating, the work was begun.

Dick stationed the men on both sides of the road, extending along for a distance of more than a quarter of a mile.

His plan was to let the British get pretty well along, and then close up on them from both sides, and to cut off farther advance, as well as all chance for retreat.

Of course, he had no idea how soon the British would make the move, but he hoped they would make it early.

There is nothing more trying than having to wait under such circumstances.

The men, of course, were eager to fight.

They would much rather fight than sit there in the woods with nothing to do.

But they would have to wait until the British came along, whether they wished to do so or not.

In fact, there was no absolute certainty that the British would come at all.

Dick thought they would, however.

He would have been willing to wager that they would do so.

The sun came up, and things took on a cheerful aspect.

It gave promise of being a beautiful day.

The spirits of the men rose.

They waited as patiently as was possible.

It was tiresome work, however.

One hour, two hours passed.

And no signs of the British.

Another hour passed.

And still the British did not come in sight.

The patriot soldiers did not lose heart, however.

They were one and all confident that the British would put in an appearance sooner or later.

Nor was their confidence misplaced.

Half an hour later, when the sun was three and a half hours high, Dick, who was up in a tree looking in the direction of New Brunswick, came down in a hurry.

"They are coming!" he cried; "get ready, boys! We will soon have plenty of work to do!"

The men would have shouted had they dared.

The news was most welcome to them.

The word was passed up and down the lines on both sides of the road.

The men gripped their muskets tightly.

They meant to make up for what they considered lost time.

They had, as they would have expressed it, been cooped up in camp for several months.

They were longing for action.

The "Liberty Boys" had done more and had got out and had some lively experiences, but the most of the patriot soldiers had been in camp, doing nothing much save to kill time.

And now they welcomed the opportunity which was presenting itself to get into action.

Presently the British soldiers came in sight.

They had drums beating and banners flying.

The fact of the matter was that the beating of the drums would have been sufficient to arouse suspicion that the British had some ulterior motive in so doing, but doubtless the British thought they were fooling the American scouts whom they felt sure were watching them, and would make them think a general move back to New York was to be made by the entire British army.

And here again is where they missed it.

Dick had foreseen what they would do, as we have seen.

So there was not much danger that they would have fooled any one, anyway.

Dick had given careful instructions, long before the British appeared in sight, so there was no need of doing this now.

He knew the men would do their duty.

There would be no trouble on that score.

The trouble would be to keep them from doing more than their duty.

On came the British.

They were unsuspecting.

They had no idea that they were running into a trap.

They thought they were fooling the "rebels" nicely.

And they were in a fair way to be fooled themselves.

At last they came along the road at the point where Dick and his men were stationed.

Dick was fair-minded.

He could not bring himself to fire upon the redcoats without first giving them warning.

When they were well within the trap he suddenly sprang out, and, waving his sword, cried:

"Surrender! Throw down your arms at once! Surrender, or die! You are in a trap and cannot escape!"

But the British were not disposed to surrender.

They were taken by surprise, true.

But they would fight just the same.

The commanding officer cried out for them to stand their ground and fight to the death.

The men were willing to fight.

Seeing that there would be a combat, Dick gave the order to fire.

Crash, roar!

The muskets rang out and made almost a deafening noise.

Many of the British fell, either dead or wounded.

Then they fired in return.

They could not see the patriots.

Dick had instructed his men to keep behind the trees. But they fired, anyway.

It was a battle at close range.

It waged furiously for awhile.

The British fought bravely.

They were at a terrible disadvantage, inasmuch as they were out in the open road, while Dick's men were sheltered by the timber.

But they did some execution, nevertheless.

Several of the patriot soldiers were killed and a number wounded.

But much greater execution was done by the patriot soldiers.

Nearly a hundred of the British were down, dead or wounded.

Then Dick gave the order to charge.

But just as his men burst out of the timber with wild yells of enthusiasm, the British commander waved a white handkerchief and shouted that he would surrender.

That brought the skirmish to a close.

The British soldiers were made prisoners.

Their wrists were fastened together with the redcoats' own canteen straps.

"What are you going to do with us?" asked the captain of the British troops.

"Take you to Middlebrook, and turn you over to General Washington," replied Dick.

The British captain looked puzzled.

"How did you know we were coming this way, in time to get here and ambush us?" he asked.

"We didn't know it," replied Dick.

"You did not?"

"No."

"Then how happened it that you were here?"

"Well, you see, we surmised you would make some such move."

"You surmised it?"

"Yes."

"How came you to think we would do anything of this kind?"

"Well, you see, we knew that it was intended to move on Philadelphia to-day, and we were aware of the fact that your commander-in-chief knew that we knew this; so we figured it that you would try to make us think the idea of advancing toward Philadelphia had been given up, and that the army would return to New York instead."

"Ah! and you came here and lay in wait for us on the strength of that supposition!"

"We did. We set the trap for you, and you obligingly walked into it."

The officer grimaced.

"We certainly did," he admitted; "well, it can't be helped now."

"No, it can't be helped now," said Dick; "you're in the trap and can't get out of it."

"And might as well make the best of it," said Bob, who stood near.

"True," the officer said; "we can't help the matter any by complaining, so the best plan is, as you say, to make the best of it."

The officer's tone was sad.

It was plain that he was deeply chagrined.

He saw now that his men had been equal in number to those under Dick.

It was galling to think that he had been forced to surrender to a force not superior to his own in point of numbers.

But it could not be helped now.

He realized this very plainly.

Dick now gave orders that all the dead should be buried.

He sent one of the men to a farmhouse, a quarter of a mile distant, and had him borrow a spade.

When the soldier returned with the spade, the men took turn about and an excavation was made large enough to hold all the bodies of the dead soldiers.

When the bodies had been placed therein and covered over, preparations were at once begun for the return to Middlebrook.

The prisoners were conducted to the point where the patriots' horses had been left.

Dick knew the horses would be equal to the task of carrying double.

One after another the prisoners were lifted to places on the backs of the horses.

Then a patriot soldier mounted behind each of the wounded soldiers, and all was ready for the start.

Dick gave the order and the start was made.

He and Bob rode in front.

As they rode along they kept a sharp lookout.

They did not know but that the sound of the firing had been heard by the British in the main encampment at New Brunswick.

If it had been heard, the British would come to investigate, and in that case it was possible that the patriot soldiers would have to fight to retain possession of the prisoners, and get to Middlebrook with them in safety.

So Dick and Bob kept their eyes wide open.

They had set a trap and made a good catch with it, and now that they had their game, they wished to keep it.

Dick knew that General Washington would be delighted with the success of the affair.

The capture of four hundred British was a matter of considerable moment.

It would be a great blow to Generals Howe and Cornwallis.

They would be very angry when they learned what had taken place.

General Howe especially would be wild with rage.

Under ordinary circumstances he was of a phlegmatic temperament.

And when he did become excited, he was very excited indeed.

And the loss of five hundred of his soldiers would certainly be sufficient to excite him.

No more of the British were sighted, however.

The sound of the fighting in the engagement between the redcoats and patriots may have been heard at the British encampment, and reinforcements may have been sent, but if such was the case they did not reach the scene of action in time to get sight of Dick's party.

The horses being doubly laden could not travel very fast.

They went at a fair gait, however, and an hour later the party reached Middlebrook. They dismounted and marched with their prisoners to the guardhouse.

Dick marched in front, erect, handsome, manly. The British prisoners were a sick-looking lot.

Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys" and the four other companies which had assisted them in making the capture of the British, were the heroes of the hour.

They were the recipients of congratulations galore.

Their praises were on every lip.

General Washington was delighted.

He sent word for Dick to come to headquarters.

The youth reported to the commander-in-chief at once. The great man took Dick's hand and shook it heartily. "Well, my boy," he said; "you have done splendidly. You were very successful in setting your trap, and you made a big catch indeed. I cannot tell you how well pleased I am."

"I am glad we were successful, your excellency; and I am glad that you are pleased."

Dick felt very happy.

He was always glad when he had succeeded in doing something which earned the approval of the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army.

To Dick's mind, General Washington was the greatest man that ever lived.

There are many who think as Dick did, even to this day.

"I could not well help being pleased, Dick," said General Washington with a smile; "the capture of half a regiment from the British is no small matter. It will do much toward convincing the British that we are on our guard, and that they cannot easily deceive us or pull the wool over our eyes."

Then General Washington asked Dick for the details of the affair.

Dick gave the story of the capture of the British in as brief a manner as possible, and General Washington was impressed with the modesty of the youth.

Dick did not wish to claim any of the credit at all.

That was characteristic of the brave youth.

He was willing to do the work, and never worried the least with regard to whether he would get the credit for it or not.

But there was not much danger that he would not get credit for everything he did from General Washington.

The commander-in-chief was a man who kept track of the work done by the men associated with him from the highest generals on his staff to the soldiers in the ranks. He knew what they did, knew what credit they were entitled to and gave them the credit that was their due.

And of all the men under General Washington, aside from the generals on his staff, there was not one whose services he valued higher than those of Dick Slater, the boy spy.

Dick was destined to do more work in the future which would still further endear him to the heart of the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army.

THE END.

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